groups indiscriminately; almost all have learned to wear the chadri.

Urban families who believe in an equitable place for women are intimidated by current ultra-conservative attitudes which hold that women belong at home. Men do not take their womenfolk to public functions any more. Western dress, once the symbol of emancipation for women, has become anathema and has been exchanged for local fashions which include closely wrapped chader (headshawls), leaving only the eyes visible. Heads must be covered at all times in mixed company, inside or outside the home. Although this is galling to many men, as well as women, they acquiesce because to do otherwise would compromise the reputations of the women.

Initially, young women from Kabul, brought up to take an education and choice of careers for granted, suddenly found themselves confined in strict seclusion and denied freedom of movement and opportunities to prepare for careers. Professional women sat at home, or risked vilification if they sought employment with refugee organizations, such as hospitals, schools and welfare programmes.

In these early years (1978-84), only the courageous dared defy the conservatives who harassed them at work and passed poison-pen letters to their families (Dupree, N., 1984). Only those with male support persevered. The family, formerly seen by many as an oppressively restrictive institution, now became a bulwark for a modicum of freedom.

Happily, more and more families are encouraging women to take advantage of educational and professional opportunities, and, as more women come forward, the more programmes expand. Most frequently the motivation for participation is basically economic.

Changing attitudes toward work

As mentioned previously, gainful extra-domestic activities for women were generally looked upon with disfavour in the past, except among a small sector of the population. Economic distress, idleness and boredom in the refugee situation brought about changes in these attitudes. Many women who never worked before are generating a major portion of the family income. Again, male persistence often initiates their participation. For instance, when men are unable to find jobs, their insistence on purdah becomes less rigid. As one charismatic lady nurse put it: "When there is no food on the table, men quickly open the door."

Thus, some women must adjust to being principal wage earners, either because they are widows, their husbands are totally disabled from war wounds, or men are unable to find jobs.

This applies to rural women as well. They are participating in growing numbers of income-generating and self-reliance skills development programmes which are large refugee-oriented, such as tailoring projects producing quilts, school uniforms and book bags (Dupree, N., 1988b). Those who can embroider, fashion pieces of exquisite beauty which are stitched by other refugee women into garments, bags, belts and sundries under the supervision of designers, mostly foreigners.

Urban women, predominantly from families of mid to lower range professionals and bureaucrats, assist in administering these projects. Others attend, teach at or manage higher education institutions which include secondary schools, nurses' training, hospitals, clerical instruction and English language classes. The obstetrics and gynecology hospital is staffed entirely by Afghan women professionals who also staff several mobile clinics. Other women administer social welfare programmes for widows and orphans, making weekly trips into the refugee camps to identify and register needy cases.

Of interest is the fact that in order to take advantage of the services offered by such social welfare projects, widows must find their own way to the offices offering medical and commodity assistance, as well as vocational training. They have proved that when the need is there and the services suitably structured, women will take the initiative and become more independent.

For most, however, independent mobility is severely curtailed. They must be provided with door-to-door transportation before they are allowed to participate in any programme. And, although women professionals are desperately needed in the remote refugee camps, few are permitted to work with schemes which require overnight stays. This is a pattern which will have to be considered in the future as well.

LIKELY POST-REPATRIATION ROLES

The likely roles women will play in Afghanistan following implementation of the Accords and the return of refugees to the country must be examined in conjunction with background information on earlier initiatives and present realities.

Rural Women

Rural women have few opinions on roles and the pros and cons of purdah. They know they will continue to face severe economic hardships on returning home and, given the opportunity, they say they will participate in programmes, should they be offered. Widows, predictably, evidence a greater spirit of independence. When questioned about possible male objections,

many dismiss the thought by a symbolic and vigourous puff blown across an open palm.

With tragic exceptions, the composure of these women is remarkable. Many do not receive solid support from the male members of their families. In fact, some observers suggest the vaunted family support system (Dupree, N., 1989a)is breaking down. Nevertheless, these widows put their faith in their sons and in their communities at large.

It may also be that with all they have gone through, and are going through now, the future cannot be envisioned as being any worse. Perhaps they cannot, or will not, conceive of how great the devastation is, and what a monumental task lies before them.

No matter, these women will constitute a major target group and the training of personnel to assist them will be an urgent priority.

Urban Women

Passionate debates among refugee urban women evidence the depth of their grave concerns about the future.

Some men in the refugee political leadership, mindful of the values for which their ten-year jihad has been fought, insist that women must continue to be kept in strict seclusion. They would deny women the right to vote; some would even go so far as to question any education for women beyond rudimentary primary or religious education in mosque schools.

On the other hand, both male and female voices can be heard vigourously proclaiming that these attitudes are perversions of the traditional values.

One articulate woman in Peshawar worries about how women will be able to play constructive roles in reconstruction when men insist upon "keeping us cooped up like chickens", and recounts with scorn the answer given her by a prominent political leader when she asked him what role he envisioned for women: "We shall make you ministers --- of your own households."

These women know that women will be needed desperately in post-repatriation Afghanistan. To emphasize their views they ask men who insist they sit at home how they expect their womenfolk to receive services: "Will you permit your wife to open her mouth to a male dentist?"

Most observers surmise that such attitudes will crumble once the situation assumes some semblance of normality. They predict the evolving patterns in the refugee community will

continue: those families with a tradition of educating women and encouraging them to pursue careers will continue to do so; while those families who declined to allow women full participation in extra-domestic activities in the past will continue to restrict women to their household duties. Both these currents underscore the fact that, as in the past, family decision-making will dominate, although the dynamics of the decision-making process will combine the efforts of both men and women, each pushing in their own way when resistance is encountered.

Women's groups in Peshawar attest to the validity of this observation. Girls from mainly professional Kabuli families radiate an infectious dynamism, planning excitedly about completing interrupted educations and going on to become doctors, teachers, engineers, even newspaper editors. The women concede no limits to their involvement in careers of their choice; it is undoubtedly these women who have influenced the men who, on being asked if women should be given substantive role, unequivocally answer: "How can you possibly stop them!"

Numbers of young women in these active groups are relatively recent arrivals; many feel humiliated by the unaccustomed restraints on their mobility. Obvious tensions between these new arrivals and those who came earlier can be detected, especially when discussing future roles for women. These tensions no doubt will intensify after repatriation is completed and reconstruction begins, particularly when these women from Peshawar encounter women still living in Kabul.

Differences in outlook mainly revolve about Islamic interpretations regarding the mixing of the sexes in educational institutions and workplaces. Insistence on strict segregation, say some, stems from gross misinterpretations of Koranic teachings.

Other women's groups, mainly from mid-range civil servant and professional families, do not question the advocacy of segregated meeting places as an Islamic prescript. They dress in Arab-style <u>chadri</u>, covered from head to toe in a coat-dress with a separate flowing cape-like headcovering which leaves only the eyes visible. This dress they claim is an Islamic symbol which will one day be worn by Muslim women throughout the world to proclaim the unity of the Islamic <u>ummah</u> (community). These women evidence equal enthusiasm and determination to pursue constructive careers in the service of nation-building, but under segregated circumstances. Their attitudes mirror those of numbers of male professionals in Pakistan and military commanders inside Afghanistan who maintain that women are indeed obligated by Islam to serve, but that there is no reason why women cannot carry out their tasks adequately while still observing purdah.

Other women without past histories of working for earned income outside the home are mainly interested in returning to resume domestic lives. They work in Pakistan to augment meagre incomes and assuage boredom, but they also view their work for widows and the disadvantaged as a contribution to the jihad. Some admit that they now enjoy the new experience of going out to work and that making extra money is satisfying. Perhaps, they concede, the purely domestic life they led before will seem too confining when they return.

These women, however, point out that whereas here they work with the blessings of their husbands because it is a part of the jihad; many members of their families remain in Afghanistan and have no concept of the refugee mentality. Will these families be reconciled to the idea of women producing items for sale? Or will they still consider it shameful for women to engage in such activities?

They also worry about the attitudes of the younger men whose lives have been totally consumed by emotions arising from ten years of war. When the enemy has gone, these women ask, who will be the object of their aggressions? May it not take the form of oppressing women?

Reports from Kabul indicate that the women there are gravely apprehensive over these same issues. Many are said to have abandoned Western dress for less revealing indigenous styles, keeping a low profile away from government-sponsored activities.

SENSE OF SERVICE

In the past there were real problems in trying to motivate professional women to work outside Kabul and other major provincial centers. Extension work carried no status, and no extra compensation. The reluctance of city women even to contemplate service in the countryside stemmed in good part from the fact that these women were almost completely isolated from rural populations and believed in the stereotyped image of rural women as backward, almost barbaric, ignoramuses. Few had ventured beyond the cities and, if the truth be told, they were genuinely terrified of doing so.

One positive effect the refugee experience has had on these city women is that they have some in contact with rural women and developed a compassion for them and an appreciation of their ingenuity and strength. In addition, the jihad has contributed to a deeper understanding of Islam which in essence stresses egalitarianism, the obligation of all believers, men and women, to acquire education in order to better serve the community, and teaches that women, as well as men, shall be rewarded for labour.

Today a significant number of refugee women in Pakistan seeking higher professional training express the desire to be of service. Engineering candidates look forward to building potable water systems in villages and small towns, doctors and teachers speak of the need for extending services into rural areas. One young woman aspires to be a pilot. Asked why, since planes and helicopters hardly project positive images these days, she replied: "The roads are destroyed, how can medical supplies be delivered otherwise?" A budding newspaper editor plans to run features on health and child-care.

How long such attitudes will endure after the return to Afghanistan and life resumes some degree of normality is hard to predict. Certainly this is a unique opportunity to capitalize on such sentiments, to direct them into innovative programming before they dissipate.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

This discussion indicates that although Afghan women traditionally participated in a multiplicity of economic endeavours, generally they have been underutilized in development processes. Changes occurring at present offer opportunities to rectify this.

The development slate has been almost wiped clean, literally, through bombardment. It will be tragic if old-style development systems are reintroduced. Afghanistan is not the same, and, anyway, the old systems were largely unsuccessful. It is time to start anew by introducing innovative planning strategies bearing direct impact on the welfare of women.

- A catalytic body should be established to make sure that programmes having women as their primary target move women into the mainstream of society through technical support and access to resources.

  An urgent priority for such a body would be to identify a core of articulate women courageous enough to institute change.

- Policy guidelines enabling women to participate in activities beyond the traditional fields of medicine, education and administration should be formulated.

  These guidelines should provide as well for the fulfillment of social goals and personal rewards.

- Programming initially should focus on small, local communities which will fall outside institutional

services, be they in the cities or in the villages, so that the needs of the most vulnerable returnees may be identified and low-income groups may receive immediate, tangible benefits directly, enabling them to achieve self-sufficiency as early as possible.

- Women's programming should be coordinated with, and supplement, health and education programmes which initially will be of high priority.

- Women should be included in all phases of reconstruction planning.

How these goals may best be accomplished will depend on the constitution of a future government. Attention to cultural sensitivities will be essential. To propose that women step out prematurely would be detrimental in the long run.

The possibility that separate-but-equal policies will be reinstituted must be taken into consideration. Usually such separate institutions are far from equal. Equitable planning, financing, equipping and monitoring for separate institutions should be established as a major component in all future programming. Separate institutions do not necessarily need to imply inferiority - if special vigilance is provided. In fact, there is no reason why separate women's institutions should not become superior institutions.

SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Regional and ethnic characteristics, available personnel in each region, local conditions and attitudes will affect the selection of specific projects for women. The following represent just a few possible directions which may be useful in identifying priority sectors, focusing on both rural and urban women.

General Observations

Motherhood will remain the foremost priority option for the majority of Afghan women.

Special Target Groups

1- Widows and Orphans will constitute the largest group in need of increased earning potential.

2- Paraplegics and other handicapped have been sadly neglected and compassion dictates that special projects be initiated as quickly as possible.

According to conservative estimates, 1 in 10 children may be disabled. Estimates for women and men are not available, but they are highly visible in the refugee camps and hospitals are so overcrowded with newly wounded that tents have been pitched to accommodate the recent (August 1988) surge.

The handicapped are difficult for any society to care for adequately and constructively. This is all the more acute for Afghanistan which is technically totally unprepared to meet this crisis.

Afghan society is also culturally ill-equipped to provide a dignified place for the handicapped. This is particularly true of handicapped women who most often are set aside by husbands when they take second wives, consigning these mostly young women to lives of abject loneliness. Yet most all the handicapped are mentally alert.

- Handicapped women - children and men - should be afforded the means to lead economically and socially productive lives as soon as is humanly possible. This is a pressing priority.

Rural Women

- Training for community workers to identify vulnerable families and refer them to appropriate agencies would be of immediate benefit.

- Refugee programmes utilizing community workers have found that women respond readily to service workers from within their own communities and - most importantly - women from the community have responded to training responsibly and intelligently.

- Milch cows. Widows, particularly, have traditionally derived a comfortable income and a respected place in the community by supplying milk and milk products to others. This has the added advantage of utilizing the services of minor children, traditional tenders of animals.

- Poultry. There is an acute scarcity of protein in Afghanistan because so many herd animals have been destroyed in the war. The present Kabul regime imports meat from India chickens from Bulgaria.

  Women are used to caring for a few chickens, but if they could be given chicks and feed and instructed in more scientific poultry raising, this would enable them to achieve more than self-sufficiency, and, it would benefit the nation as well.

- Fruit and Vegetable Processing. These are traditional functions performed by women. With the introduction of simple, improved technology they could produce meaningful surpluses.

- Tailoring. Almost all women have some knowledge of tailoring, and in the past one household in each section of the village would own a machine. The women derived not only income but a sense of accomplishment by sewing for those without machines. All-day sewing sessions added to community cohesiveness.

- Sericulture. Primarily restricted to the north, sericulture was dying out as an art form. The expansion of this home industry would help revive a part of the culture as well as providing income.

- Handicrafts. It may well be that the refugee experience has lifted the stigma from selling handiwork for profit. Whether embroideries could be developed into a viable home industry would have to be investigated. Profitable ventures in the past were always managed by foreigners - who pocketed the profits.

- Credit. Free hand-outs should to be avoided. This means that innovative credit schemes should be devised, which would be free from interest and collateral commitment and be recovered in easy installments.

  Several NGOs in Pakistan have been successful in lending and recovering funds for capital and/or equipment. These are precedents to build on.

- Marketing. Afghan rural women have rarely been involved in marketing. Men would probably have to be mobilized to perform this service. There are precedents for this, as noted above.

  The traditional male/female economic roles strengthened mutual respect within the family. There seems no reason why these traditional functions could not be extended to include non-family members in kin-related communities, thus strengthening community cohesiveness.

Urban Women

- Training a cadre of women to implement projects in the rural areas. Centralized government services will be a long time in materializing.

It is possible that some foreign NGO personnel will not be welcome for some time. The time to start training this cadre is now.

- <u>Training for community services</u> for the urban poor.

- <u>Training in the production of non-formal education aids.</u> Service programmes in both rural and urban areas will benefit greatly from effective visual aids because of the high rate of illiteracy.

- Some materials were being developed before 1978 and NGOs in Pakistan have developed some extremely effective materials. More will be needed.

- <u>Training radio programmers</u>. The transistor radio is ubiquitous, if not in every home at least within each community. It should be used as a powerful education tool among non-literate communities.

  Many of the most prevalent diseases are easily prevented through education. For instance: skin and eye infections, malnutrition from poor weaning practices; gastro-intestinal diseases, the cause of most infant and child mortality.

  Women are now aware, as they never were before, that health services can, and should be provided. They will demand more services, but centralized agencies will take a long time to establish effective networks. The radio can be used partly to fill this gap.

- <u>Training for entrepreneurs</u>. As discussed above, there will be a large number of widows and single women in post-repatriation Afghanistan. They will want to enter into independent economic ventures. Most will have had little experience.

  Precedents exist. During the decade before 1978, numbers of women unwilling to step completely into the public sphere opened dressmaking shops and beauty salons. Most typically these were located in one corner of the family compound. This provided a sense of security, but still allowed them to enhance their personal economic independence. Similar enterprises could be expanded into any number of fields.

  Favourable lines of credit would have to be offered, contingent perhaps on providing employment for low-income women.

WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER REPATRIATION
Preliminary Needs Assessment

Prepared for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

INTRODUCTION

Initial responses to questions concerning future roles for women in Afghanistan almost inevitably reflect current uncertainties, the "wait and see" attitudes characteristic of unsettled times in transition. The composition and style of the future leadership will affect women's roles, depending on whether ultra-conservative or moderate Islamic beliefs prevail. But no one knows what that leadership will be.

Everyone agrees that Afghanistan is so devastated - physically, economically, socially - that each and every one, man and woman, must be called upon to play a part in the momentous challenges of reconstruction. Discussions over female participation in these tasks, nevertheless, tend to ramble through grey zones involving the molding of values, and, since women are regarded as the perpetuators of these values, their roles are seen to embody the very preservation of the essence of Afghan culture.

Hence, because their position is so vital, attitudes toward women are polarized; there is no clear focus and certainly no articulated policy concerning the future status of women.

To say, however, that it is premature to assess women's needs at this time would be a disservice. It is precisely because goals have yet to be defined that those concerned must begin to investigate what role changes have and may take place, what needs such changes will create, and what new directions, dimensions and possibilities might be encouraged in order to ensure Afghan women a dignified place within the context of Afghan cultural ideals.

In order to make an attempt at answering these weighty questions, opinions from broad segments of the refugee population in and around Peshawar, Pakistan, were sought. Among them were urban and rural women in all adult age groups with varying ethnic and economic backgrounds, representing disparate political views. Men with equally varied backgrounds were also queried, including political leaders, policy-making bureaucrats in Peshawar, and <u>mujahideen</u> (resistance fighters) military commanders from inside Afghanistan.

- Management and commercial classes. Whether women will seek employment in mixed or separate work places, offices and institutions will need trained personnel.

  The computer age has passed these refugee women in Peshawar by, and they should be given the change to catch up.

  There are too many educational drop-outs. These types of classes would afford girls who do not wish to pursue higher professional studies the opportunity to acquire other marketable skills.

- Transport and Hostel Facilities. All training programmes will have to provide trainees either transport or safe hostel facilities.

  Up until the 1960s few girls from the provinces were permitted to attend Kabul University. When a hostel was built, they came in large numbers.

- Employment Exchange. There are many women working in Pakistan in service-oriented programmes and attending skill-development programmes. Where will they go when repatriation takes place? To lose them would mean the loss of years of constructive effort; a great loss for the reconstruction effort.

  Some system of coordinating information should be institutionalized with the cooperation of the NGOs.

  Later, similar facilities will be needed to link women in need with appropriate assistance personnel.

- An Institute for Women. Somehow women's voices need to be heard. Afghan women have not been militant in demanding their rights, and there is no reason to believe they will suddenly do so. This pattern should be respected, and means sought for informal persuasion.

  This will require a meeting place, an informal forum where women can articulate their views in a relaxed atmosphere and exchange ideas.

  It has been emphasized that such an institution should not, under any circumstances, be called a "shop" or a "meeting place" because both terms carry negative, unfeminine connotations.

  A Women's Association has existed in Kabul since the 1920s, primarily as an official conduit of largesse from the ruling elite or as a leftist orientation hall.

The longevity of this institution indicates that the concept is culturally acceptable.

So far it has been manipulated by male-dominated policy makers. Is it possible to turn a new leaf? Is it possible to establish a similar, but economically-oriented, viable, independent institution to fulfill recognized women's needs on a number of levels?

According to tentative thinking by Afghan women in Peshawar, it should be possible to establish a low-key centre in Kabul which would:

- sponsor non-formal education and support programmes for women in Kabul and surrounding villages;

- function as an outlet for products produced by women participating in the programmes, generating its own funds for self-sufficiency and funding for the development programmes;

- provide a relaxed social environment for women involved in or managing the development including a small library of books and magazines, where women could gather informally to socialize and exchange ideas;

- be non-political, non-formal, and, autonomous of government.

As repatriation begins, no serious programmes for women have come from the refugee leadership. The NGOs which have spent ten years experimenting with successful development approaches involving women will be investigating possibilities for either shifting refugee programmes inside, or passing on-going programmes to development-oriented agencies. A case in point is the International Rescue Committee which plans to shift its women's English-language and journalism classes to Kabul if they are invited to do so, having in mind that this project will eventually fit in with some development programmes. At that point, IRC would phase out. NGOs which have not participated in refugee assistance now seek to participate in the reconstruction/development phase.

As the UN system develops and begins implementation of a major international rehabilitation programme, there needs to be a mechanism, a sentinel, to ensure that the women's dimension is examined and incorporated.

<u>Women must not be left invisible</u>

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This paper attempts to evaluate this information by setting it against a background of personal experiences in urban and rural Afghanistan before 1978. Primary women's roles in the past are contrasted with life in exile, in order to suggest some strategic approaches and specific projects which might serve as a basis for action at the appropriate time.

Some relevant data sources, in addition to the references cited, have been included but it must be emphasized that this is largely unplumbed territory, and in the assigned, too-short, investigation period it was possible only to skim the surface, to open some windows toward further insights.

Overall, the collected information suggests that although the intensities of current problems may be different, broad categories of needs remain identifiable. Two forces drive women today: acute economic and self-confidence deficiencies, on the one hand, and an infectious dynamism on the other. If the self-confidence and dynamism can be brought together, great accomplishments await. However, the special needs of women do not appear in the recent, grandiose planning for Afghanistan's reconstruction. It is high time to rectify this fact; for no programme can really succeed without input from women.

PRIMARY ROLES OF WOMEN

Traditional Pre-1978 Roles: Rural and Urban

Motherhood is the most sought after role, and the family is the single most important institution in Afghan society. According to one survey only 1-2% of either men or women reached the age of 65 unmarried (Afghan Demographic Studies (ADS), 1975: 69). In addition, although patriarchal attitudes governed life-crises decisions such as the selection of marriage mates and career options, women were considered to be the core of each individual family. Upon them rested the honour of the family, as well as its well-being.

Hence a girl gained status as she progressed from fiancée to bride to mother to mother-in-law to grandmother, the respected matriarch of large extended families (Dupree, L., 1980:192-205).

Rural Women

About 85% of the Afghan population lived in rural areas. Most rural women were relatively free to move about within the residential sections of their villages because the villages were either totally kin-related or organized into kin-oriented segments.

Women always wore small embroidered caps draped with long scarves, normally bright red for the young, white for widows. The <u>chadri</u>, a long, sack-like garment composed of a myriad of pleats cascading to the ground from a skull-cap, leaving only a crocheted window over the eyes, was seldom seen in villages. Only those few women, usually among the more well-to-do, who had been to big cities, wore the <u>chadri</u>, as a symbol of their sophistication.

Under normal circumstances, Afghan rural women did not expend an inordinate amount of time or energy fetching water and collecting fuel. When they were responsible for collecting water, it was most typically combined with social interactions by the river or a spring. Fuel gathering was normally the chore of young sons who collected straw and scrub; very young daughters collected dung along the village alleyways and pathways. Both girls and boys, sometimes at very young ages, were responsible for taking the family animals out to graze.

Women worked with men in certain light agricultural tasks, such as harvesting cotton, pulses, fruits and nuts. Melon harvesting was a greatly anticipated outing when the whole family moved from the village to camp on the hillside next to their melon fields. These collective chores were typically carried out with much laughter and singing; in no way did they conform to the stereotype of women bound to unremitting labour.

In fact, rural women enjoyed many interrelated work experiences with men. The men harvested the grains and vegetables, the women processed them. The men herded and sheared the sheep, the women spun the wool and wove the carpets which the men then took to market. Mutual respect grew from the acknowledged interdependence of male/female roles, and women derived self-esteem and confidence from these cooperative efforts.

No monetary value was placed on women's labours, however.

<u>Urban Women: to 1959</u>

Afghan history is replete with accounts of women who gained renown through literature, education and politics (Rahimi, 1986), but attitudes regarding a secluded, separate place for women in society remained largely constant until the 20th century.

Lower and middle class urban women were more strictly confined to reproductive and domestic roles than rural women. Men worked at jobs which women little understood, so there was no mutual identification of roles. Furthermore, women were tightly confined within the four walls of their homes because the cities were congested places where non-kin-related groups were hopelessly mixed. No woman might venture forth without a male

escort, not even to do her shopping, which was done for her by males, depriving her of even these simple choices in life.

These conditions prevailed until the beginning of the 20th century when spokesmen, primarily male, first began to call for a more equitable place for women in the totality of the society (Dupree, N., 1978: Schinasi, 1979). During the 1920s, under King Amanullah (1919-1929), a girls' school was established, a women's newspaper was published, a Marriage Code was written, and women were enjoined to come out from behind the veil, to put an end to seclusion (purdah: literally, curtain), and join men in national development, especially in the fields of education and medicine (Stewart, 1973).

Significantly, the women who responded took to dressing in Western styles which from this time forward symbolized women's emancipation.

The religious opposition, who perceived themselves as custodians of religious mores, objected to the reforms, which they characterized as contrary to Hanafi Sunni Shariat (theological law) which, according to some interpreters, recommends complete purdah for women. The religious hierarchy predicted female mobility would lead to demoralization, promiscuity and the breakdown of the Islamic social order (Nawid, 1987).

Partly because of this, the religious leaders overthrew King Amanullah (1929) and, among other things, abolished all vestiges of reforms for women. The girls' school was closed and western dress for women was outlawed.

Nine months later collateral members of the exiled royal family regained the throne (October 1929), and separate educational and medical facilities for women were gradually reinstated.

Urban Women: 1959-1978

Because of government support to these institutions throughout the 1930s, 40s and early 50s, when the government encouraged the voluntary end of seclusion and removal of the veil in 1959 (Dupree, L., 1950 + 1980: 530-533), scores of women were well-qualified to move with confidence into the public sphere, proving by their impeccable demeanour that they could function outside purdah with no loss of honour to themselves or their families, and with great credit to the nation (Rahimi, 1986).

The key to the success of this revolutionary action on behalf of women was the fact that the government did not force women to abandon purdah or the veil. It was a totally voluntary

family decision. Many, particularly among the lower and middle urban classes, preferred to keep their women in seclusion.

The Constitution of 1964 enfranchised women and guaranteed them equal rights, education and the right to work, among other things (Dupree, L., 1965). A Penal Code (1976) and a Civil Law (1977) sought to provide protection against child marriages, forced marriages and abandonment, but the constitutional injunction that no law be repugnant to the basic principles of Islam permitted numbers of sex-discriminatory social customs favourable to male domination to be perpetuated by their entrenchment in the legal statutes. In addition, because the government continued to insist on the voluntary acceptance of change, laws favourable to women were indifferently enforced. One positive exception was the Special Court for Family Affairs, set up in 1975, which was presided over by both male and female judges trained in secular law as well as Islamic jurisprudence.

As the evolution of women's public role accelerated, women developed a consciousness of their own worth as contributors to national development. Growing dissatisfaction over restraints on social mobility caused women to realize that although they were being encouraged to seek higher education and career opportunities, yet they were constrained to socialize within the extended family and denied the privilege of choosing their own marriage mates. Frustration mounted (Knabe, 1974, 1977).

Also, as more and more women entered the work force, competition caused resentment and the women's movement stagnated. Nevertheless, women were unwilling to capitalize on the power their new status as working and contributing members of society offered them. They failed to raise their voices to demand the rights guaranteed them by law.

Urban Women: 1978 to 1988

The programme announced by the leadership of the People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (PDPA), who staged a leftist coup in April 1978, promised to usher a new era providing absolute equality for women. Decrees on equal rights and marriage regulations were issued (Decree No. 7; Beattie, Dupree, N., Tapper in Shahrani and Canfield, 1984). Women became more visible in the public forum, but visibility created reaction. Female party members and daughters of PDPA members received seats at the university, but other girls were kept out of school deliberately. Party members enunciated principles from rostrums, but the demonstrations in which girls carrying banners jostled in the streets with boys were generally viewed with extreme distaste (Dupree, N., 1984).

Girls in Peshawar today (1988) aver that only party members have ever enjoyed greater freedoms under the PDPA, and they

question the quality of the freedom party girls are given. The Peshawar women feel many Kabul women are employed in jobs unbecoming to women, such as trolley-bus drivers, and police agents. Whatever the truth of these views, the psychological relationships between women and men appears not to have altered. Moreover, opponents accused the new regime of directly interfering with family prerogatives, Islamic values, and customary social prescriptions. Attacks on the institution of family were perceived as affronts to the honour of women and led many families to choose exile as a less repugnant alternative to living under such influences.

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE BEFORE 1978

Women do not figure prominently in the statistics of individuals who received payment for services or products in Afghanistan before the war. Afghan demographic statistics are suspect, however. The first phase of the only national census ever taken was attempted as late as 1972 (Kerr, 1978), and the results indicate no more than general trends (Afghan Demographic Studies (ADS), 1975). Furthermore, these figures were almost immediately questioned by a subsequent survey (World Bank, 1978).

Several qualifications need to be kept in mind regarding the survey's finding that only about 8% of women over the age of eight, in both urban and rural areas, were economically active; i.e., receiving earnings (ADS, 1975:93). Housewives were not included in this figure, and many other unpaid economic contributions to household and community were taken for granted. In addition, particularly in the urban milieu, gainful employment by women was considered to reflect shamefully on male ego-images as sole supporters of their families. Many women did work for earnings, but such economic activities would not have been admitted to outsiders, least of all census takers. In addition, women who were not permitted to work for earnings found fulfillment in women's communities and networks where they performed many tasks for one another (Doubleday, 1988; Shalinskey)

Rural Women

In the rural sample of production-related activities, including agriculture and animal husbandry (Tavakolian, 1984), weavers and spinners represented the highest percent of women reporting earned income. Women from poorer families working as servants for the more affluent were also represented in this sample. (ADS, 1975).

Significantly absent, however, was mention of the managerial services rural women perform. The management of the household and the training of young girls was totally in their

hands, and women were usually the custodians of family finances and household supplies. These women, typically the matriarchs, were responsible for distributing harvest supplies in amounts calculated to last until the next harvest was brought in. If she was inept, the family either starved or went into debt. These qualities belie the stereotypes which characterize rural women as helpless, ignorant non-entities (personal observations, 1962-1978). They are important assets which have sustained women in exile; they will be of inordinate importance after repatriation.

In the field of handicrafts, 87% of the total number of workers making items for sale were women (Central Statistics, 1976; ILO, 1978). The vast majority of women's handicrafts were never offered for sale, however. The women sewed, embroidered and wove for their families, most particularly to fill the hope chests of their daughters. Most families considered it shameful to sell their handiwork.

Participation in handicraft activities on an economic basis was mostly a regional phenomenon. For instance, knotted carpet weaving and felt-making dominated in the north, including Herat; flat-woven carpets (gelim) were produced in the north also, but in large numbers around Ghazni and in the Hazarajat as well. In Kandahar and the Hilmand Valley, embroidery and beaded cap-making was popular. Embroidered turban caps (kola) were mostly offered for sale in northern cities, although almost every family made them for their families. Embroidered sheepskin coats (postin) which enjoyed great popularity in the 1960s and 70s in the West were made predominantly in Kabul where Afghan and foreign entrepreneurs set up workshops. The craft was native, however, to the Ghazni area. Foreign designers set up thriving businesses by providing gelim-makers with modern, state-of-the-art designs.

As mentioned previously, almost all these types of economic activities were primarily joint male/female efforts: the men secured the raw materials and managed the marketing of the goods made by women. Although, as in all discussions of Afghan patterns, exceptions must be noted. Women sometimes took embroidered turban caps to market places in the north, and the sold beaded caps and embroidered shirt pieces on the sidewalks of Kandahar.

Urban Women

Most women in the workforce were found in the cities: mainly in the capital city of Kabul, but in increasing numbers in provincial urban centers. By far the highest percent of female earners in these cities were professionals, technicians and administrators employed by the government, with a lesser percent in sales and production, or privately and self-employed. These included shop owners, shop workers, household-based sellers,

street vendors, knitters, tailors, embroiderers, hair stylists, and food and beverage producers running small, household-based factories (ADS, 1975).

THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

A significant refugee flow to Pakistan began in 1978 and continued unabated, with ebbs and surges mirroring the politically volatile areas along the Pakistan-Afghan border (Dupree, L. + N., 1988). This has become one of the saddest chapters in Afghanistan's long history even though the successes of the refugee programmes have been remarkable: there have been no epidemics, little acute malnutrition and no real major outbreaks of violence. Still, living is harsh, and the physical hardships are extreme for all (Dupree, N., 1987a).

Women have endured the physical difficulties with admirable fortitude. Now, however, after ten years of life in exile, numbers of psychological and physical disorders have surfaced which will certainly affect the lives of these women after the resolution of the Afghan issue (Dupree, N., 1988a).

Specifics will be discussed below in relation to possible strategies and projects for the future, but three general conditions will have an overall impact on both rural and urban women in the future: 1) changes in the demographic balance; 2) imposition of stricter behavioural codes; 3) changing attitudes toward work.

Changes in the Demographic Balance

Possibly nearly a million men have died fighting in the jihad (struggle or resistance), although accurate figures are impossible to obtain. Consequently, there will be far more women than men in a post Accords Afghanistan. There are tens of thousands of widows among the refugees; other thousands of young girls have lost their intended mates. Tradition will dictate that these women be provided for by male kin, but the presence of so many unattached women, many with numerous children, will constitute an economic burden, which in many cases will become acute and affect the well-being of many women.

This will undoubtedly result in an increase of multiple marriages. Indeed, the institution of multiple marriages in Islam was encouraged after similar great battles fought during the time of the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) left countless women and children without sustenance and protection. Also, the customary practice of the leverite, expressly forbidden in the Koran, whereby a widow is forced to marry her deceased husband's brother, seems to be on the rise after years of

declining popularity. Other widows are marrying much older men reluctantly in order to provide for their children.

Another worrisome development is the apparent breakdown of normal procedures for securing honourable mates for girls. Although discriminatory practices of marrying off girls to pay off debts or acquire political or social advantages were by no means unknown in the past, preferred marriage partners were first cousins, and, in general, elaborate rituals associated with selecting mates were definitely mindful of the future happiness and well-being of the bride-to-be. Most often women were responsible for assessing the age and character of the groom, as well as the acceptability of his family. The women also drove hard bargains from the best financial arrangements to ensure respect and status for the bride. These important responsibilities added to a woman's status within the family and throughout the women's networks and communities (Doubleday, 1988).

These networks have largely broken down in Pakistan. Too many first cousins have been killed; desirable males are at a premium. Sadly, too many marriages are contracted hastily, by males, for less than palatable considerations.

Further, urban refugees are not entitled to refugee assistance and are consequently experiencing economic hardships causing them to be loathe to incur marriage expenses for their daughters. Also, because educational facilities for refugees are minimal and many young men opt for the jihad rather than school, there is a paucity of eligible educated men, further depleting the chances for marriage among the urban educated families. Many urban educated refugee girls, although they will have passed the preferred marriageable age before the situation settles and normal marriage patterns resume, most certainly will rebel against becoming second wives, or being married to old and uneducated men. In addition to seeking employment to relieve the economic burden on their families, these women will look for meaningful activities to bolster self-confidence and self-esteem.

Expanded employment opportunities will be required urgently for these large groups of rural and urban women in the post-repatriation period.

Imposition of stricter behavioural codes

When threatened, all cultures tend to place greater protective restrictions on women. This is amply demonstrated in the current refugee situation.

Rural women are mostly confined to their homes, be it tent or mud hut, because the congested camps mix ethnic and tribal

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WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

A Preliminary Needs Assessment

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The United Nations General Assembly established the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women (UN/VFDW) in 1976. In 1985 the Fund moved into autonomous association with UNDP as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Its mandate is to ensure the appropriate involvement of women in mainstream development activities, and to support innovative and experimental activities benefitting women.